

Absolutism (mid 1600s – early 1700s)

POLITICAL

FRANCE: **Louis XIV** (1613-1715)

- Civil War in his youth, the *Fronde* caused by power struggle between Mazarin – representing the monarchy – and the nobles aligned with Paris Parliament.
- takes throne in 1661:
- replaces violence with court ritual – great nobles compete for his favor.
- **Versailles** is an extension of King's glory – the great trap. War is now a matter of state, with state control over finances and men. Louis XIV supports four wars – the last will be in next column:
- claims Spanish Netherlands (1667-1668) – but only gains a few towns
- Dutch War (1672-1678) – more land in Burgundy gained
- his armies lay waste German border states (1688-97) but he is forced to return all lands except for Strasbourg.

ENGLAND: Religious tensions contribute to war. **Puritans** and King **Charles I** come to war (1642-1646). **Oliver Cromwell** led the New Model Army to victory, and Charles is tried and beheaded. Cromwell's armies brutally suppress rebellions by Catholics in Ireland. He also wages war on Dutch (this is also an economic trade war) Cromwell dies in 1658, **Charles II** returns to England (**Restoration**).

PRUSSIA: **Frederick William (the Great Elector)** cuts deals with powerful *Junkers*, the great landowners of Prussia. Develops military (Spartan) state. His son, **Frederick I** is proclaimed King after agreeing to fight against Louis XIV in **War of Spanish Succession**.

SWEDEN: Prussia's great rival in Baltic dominates.

AUSTRIA/HUNGARY: Turks were finally cleared out of Hungary after **Siege of Vienna** (1683). Austrians and Hungarians have power struggle, but will unite against the lesser groups in this polyglot empire. Leopold I destroys Turkish buildings and restores Catholicism to the formally Turkish occupied regions. Hapsburgs must bear the cost of defending Europe against the Turks much to Louis XIV's delight. (Hapsburgs vs. Bourbons).

RUSSIA: Old Believers reject changes in Russian worship services. They rebel, were persecuted, and go underground. Modernization of Russia slowly begins with European/ French influence.

POLAND: Weak constitutionalism results in revolts and sporadic, destructive fighting. Jews and Protestants caught in the middle – many Protestants flee. Nobles insist on *Liberum Veto* (free Veto), which allowed them to dissolve parliament.

ECONOMIC

Louis XIV rules France with *intendants* (governors) who supervise tax collection and public work projects. **Colbert** is the finance minister who oversees the bureaucracy and the new economic doctrine of **mercantilism**: Governments intervene to increase nation wealth. Mercantilism means hoarding of gold and silver, heavy subsidies, tariffs on incoming goods and protectionism. Colonies were milked for raw materials. Over time, this policy is flawed: short term wealth for long-term economic stagnation. Mercantilism's profits often went for Louis XIV's military endeavors – a double blow to the French economy. Huguenots flee France after 1685 – the loss of their skills and industry weakens French economy.

RELIGIOUS

FRANCE: **Jansenists** (a religious group that is Catholic with Protestant overtones) finds followers in the French *Parlements*. Louis sees this as a threat to his power. Eventually he **revokes the Edict of Nantes** (1685). He closes Huguenot churches, schools. Thousands flee to England, Prussia, even North America.

ENGLAND: the **Civil War** and **Commonwealth** of 1642-1660 inspires many fringe groups, many religious or socialist in overtones. They include Levelers, Diggers, Quakers, Seekers, and Ranters. Cromwell has headaches trying to suppress these groups who now want their freedoms. During the restoration, English laws seek to prevent Catholic participation with Test Act of 1673 and Exclusion Act of 1678.

Dutch Republic practices religious toleration. Dutch Jew, **Spinoza**, writes in freedom.

SOCIAL

Women begin to hold salons. Aristocratic women write and observe. Women writers begin to publish, though they were often ridiculed by others. Some women study science on their own. Aristocratic women support refined manners that separate themselves from the lower classes. Middle class tries to catch up by also assimilating upper crust ways. Popular Culture (read: lower classes) knows little of new developments in science or literature. They continue to live lives focused on trade, festivals, and religion. Elite and popular culture gap widens (with middle class trying to adopt elite ways). Superstitious practices were attacked by churches.

INTELLECTUAL

Thomas Hobbes (1558-1679) argues that man (whose life is nasty, brutish, and short) should give up personal liberty for a monarch

and collective security. (He tutored Charles II.)

John Locke 1632-1704 argues that the social contract is a basis for constitutionalism. He also writes that mankind is not inherently bad, but rather a *tabula rasa* – or blank slate – whose actions were tied to how well they were treated. Government should protect life, liberty and property.

Scientific: **Isaac Newton** (1642-1727) published *Principia Mathematica* (1687). Laws of motion and physics laid down. Gottfried **Leibniz** and Newton discover calculus at same time. **Royal Academies** (science-based societies) were founded.

ARTISTIC

FRANCE: Arts were used for political purposes. Louis XIV depicts himself as Roman Gods – Apollo or Mars. Arts were treated as a branch of the government and subsidized, including theater, music, opera, and of course, Versailles. Versailles became the model for the rest of Europe with mini-Versailles created by other monarchs. French taste is supreme. French classicism develops as opposed to Catholic baroque.

ENGLAND: Great Fire (1666) creates opportunity for rebuilding London (St. Paul's – architect Christopher Wren). Theaters re-opened – women will now portray women.

DUTCH REPUBLIC: **Jan Vermeer** paints *Girl with Pearl Earring* and other masterpieces depicting order, maps (trade), and subdued luxury. The Dutch were orderly, wealthy, great readers, and traders.